The Indian Image of Nineteenth Century Europe

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Girija K. Mookerjee

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THE INDIAN IMAGE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

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For

FREDA

who made life meaningful and worth living

FOREWORD

This slender volume contains the text of Dr. Girija K. Mookerjee's Inaugural Lecture at the School as Visiting Professor of European Studies, delivered on 25 February 1965. Dr. Mookerjee has lived and worked for about thirty years in Europe. He is very knowledgeable on European affairs and knows well a large number of European leaders in various walks of life. He is also the author of several books and articles on European and Indian affairs as well as on international affairs in general.

The Indian School of International Studies is perhaps the first Indian University institution to start a programme of European Studies in this country. Some students and members of the staff are currently doing doctoral and post-doctoral research on various aspects of current European affairs. It is our earnest hope that our modest initiative in the promotion of European Studies in India would receive both Indian and European support. For the last one hundred and fifty years, our contacts with Europe were largely through Britain. Since our Independence in August 1947, we have had closer and wider relations with most of the countries of continental Europe. And this has led to the Indian Government and the Indian *élite* to appreciate and promote European Studies in this country. One hopes that there is equal appreciation in continental Europe of the importance of the study of Indian affairs, so that a mutually beneficial exchange might be established in the intellectual field, as much as in other fields.

M.S. RAJAN
Director
Indian School of International Studies

29 April 1967

THE INDIAN IMAGE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

When I had decided that my inaugural address should be on the "Indian Image of Nineteenth-Century Europe," I thought that I would concentrate on the writings of a few outstanding men of the nineteenth century who had left behind their reflections on Europe, the Europeans, and the European civilization, and their varied and collective impact on our national habits, institutions, and thinking. But as I went on collecting materials and exploring the large body of literature which had grown on the subject, I realized that if I wanted to do full justice to the subject, I would have to write a book. But, as the time at my disposal was limited, I had to content myself with an abridged treatment of this very exciting subject by selecting only the essential features of the theme. This work is therefore confined generally to the ideological clash which the impact with the West had produced on the Indian mind. The Indian mind, being what it is, does not respond to new ideas and events promptly, for as a result of centuries of civilized history, we have acquired a highly discerning mind which refuses to be overwhelmed or hustled by any new idea or any new evidence. Many foreign observers of the Indian scene have called this a kind of atavism of spirit, and some European scholars, unable to fathom the depth of the Indian mind, have often come to the conclusion that although at its best it is lofty and rich, it is at its worst the most slothful mind anywhere in the civilized world. Some of them even call it a malady.

Nevertheless, it has this to be said in our favour that we Indians do not want to accept, and in fact we are incapable of accepting, any values without experimentation.

We may, because of this attitude, lack in mental vigour, but situated as we are in the heart-land of Asia and Europe, constantly subjected to many new ways of thinking, we have, in the course of centuries, developed, almost by instinct, the habit of not being rushed into any kind of new conclusion or easy generalization without careful observation and long reflection.

This view has some relevance to the subject of our discussion because the impact of the first arrival of the Europeans in our country took place when we were somewhat ahead, in certain fields of technology and social organization, of most of the countries of the world. Yet it did not bring about the social and spiritual revolution which it was meant to do. Some scholars have analysed the causes of the failure of this impact by giving different versions of the nature of the impact. Some Western scholars even say that because of the discovery of America and the application of the European mind to the colonization of America, we were saved from the fate which befell the original inhabitants of that continent. This view is held by a number of European historians of the Middle Ages, although their knowledge of Indian history and Indian conditions has not been as great as that of Europe. Suppose, however, that Columbus had not been able to discover America and consequently the Portuguese seafarers and adventurers had concentrated their energy and their strength on India, either to conquer it or to transform it. Would they then have succeeded in changing us or even ruling over us for a long time? Indian society at the time of the Crusades and at the time of Henry the Navigator was already well developed and the Indian mind was also endowed with a keen power of judgement. To my mind, therefore, a complete conquest of the Indian mind by the Europeans represented by the Portuguese could never have taken place. And although the insularity of the Indian mind had rendered it incapable of adjudging the real value of the new dimensions of thinking which were swaying some of the peoples of Western Europe, yet the Indians who faced the European onslaught were not immature, and, in fact, as they were the end-product of a much older civilization, were more developed mentally than the people who unexpectedly stormed into their well-regulated, ritual-ridden, and tranquil lives. This is aptly illustrated in the appreciations and criticisms which the Indians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made in their writings on the European intervention in our national life, which began with the landing of the Portuguese on our western coast at the end of the fifteenth century.

I

Some European historians say that the coming of the Europeans to India at the end of the fifteenth century was due to a geopolitical compulsion. As far as one can judge from the available historical studies on the early movements or the expansion of the European peoples, it may be said now with a certain amount of certitude that one of the motivations of European expansion at that time was the general desire of some of the Christian States of Europe to weaken the Ottoman Empire and to wreak vengeance on Islam, which by its successive and successful invasions of Western Europe had weakened Christendom considerably and had even challenged the way of life precariously established by the early Christian fathers after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Byzantine inheritance of Christianity outside Europe had awakened the desire of the Christian Powers to conquer those territories which had fallen into the hands of the Moslems, and from evidences available today, one can say that the three small vessels of Vasco da Gama which reached Calicut in 1498 had the mission of attacking the Ottoman Empire from the back, in order to lessen the military pressure which the Moslems were exercising for quite a long time on Spain and Portugal. The young German historian Hassinger has characterized this attitude as *Dynamik der Kreuzzugsidee*, and, although he does not dismiss the idea that the Holy Crusades were inspired by other political and materialistic considerations, he maintains that "the motives in many cases of brutality in the religious wars of the 16th century were indeed often religious."[1] This motivation can be seen in the instructions issued by the Portuguese King, Henry the Navigator, and also in the Orders of the Day issued to the Portuguese soldiers and marines.[2] In other words, the geopolitical compulsion was generated in Portugal and other European countries by the tremendous pressure which resurgent Islam had begun to exercise on them, just as the Europeans had emerged from a period of darkness to an age of enlightenment owing to the dissemination of knowledge of science and history by the scholastics of the Renaissance. Added to this was also a cultural impulsion which was vaguely understood by the men who crossed the Seven Seas and conducted themselves as pirates and bandits, but who nevertheless thought that they were carrying a new message which Christianity of an earlier epoch had imprinted on their minds and souls. This message was that of unquestioned and absolute faith in the doctrine of Christianity—a faith which had sustained both the leaders and the simple illiterate men who accompanied them in their journey across many uncharted oceans and continents. The Roman Catholic missionaries who followed them soon afterwards were also thoroughly convinced that the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ to the heathens was a divine mission which had to be fulfilled by all the means at their disposal. The means that the Dominicans, the Jesuits, and the Roman Catholic priests adopted were often subterfuges of pressure and dissimulation of truth; nevertheless, the impact which this dynamic and less metaphysical approach to the question of religion made on a static and self-sufficient India was indeed of very great import both to the receiving country and to the countries which carried these messages. This enthusiasm was later rationalized when, in the sixteenth century, the authority of the Church was challenged everywhere in Europe. Judged by Indian standards this was pure religious fanaticism, but to this wild and uneducated bigotry, later, a new and more philosophical argument was added; and this argument emanated from the French adventurers who, inspired by the Jesuits, towards the end of the sixteenth century, and after the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes (1598) began, as Leopold von Ranke shows in his *franzoesische Geschichte*[3] to identify the *goettliche* with the *Koenigliche*, and thus laid the concept of a *bourgeois* society, in whose name, both the Church and the State afterwards undertook the task of sanctifying and acquiring new territories and newer trade routes. That is to say, the evangelical motivation was not the only cause of European appearance on Indian soil. Although the Portuguese, who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, had among them some religious fanatics, they were also a trading people, and the consideration of opportunities for trade was never far from their calculations when they began to settle on the western coast of our country. It appears from contemporary records that the Portuguese did not possess greater technical skill, but as they possessed a much stronger will, they were able, it seems, to impress themselves easily upon the Indians. However, as the Portuguese did not really belong to the mainstream of European culture or thinking (they do not, even now), their influence began to fade even before it could be established on some sort of a solid basis. About the time that the Portuguese were trying to settle down in Malabar in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the whole of Europe was being transformed by the religious conflict between the Protestant section of the Christian Church and the Roman Catholic hierarchy; but the early European settlers in India, i.e. the Portuguese, seemed to be out of this main current of events which began to shape mediaeval Europe. The reason why they succeeded in surviving on Indian soil right up to the middle of the twentieth century was that the "Lusitanians" (as the Portuguese were called) kept themselves aloof from the sixteenth-century internecine quarrels and civil wars which raged in Europe and thus managed to remain entrenched in their little settlement of Goa until it was incorporated into the Indian Union in 1961.[4]

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[1] See Hassinger, *Das Werden des neuzeitlichen Europa*: *1300-1600* (Braunschweig, 1958), p. 100

[2] Admiral Pedro Alvarez Cabral, who followed Vasco da Gama, carried a letter of the Portuguese king, and the letter contained threats to the Zamorin of Calicut because the Portuguese king wanted by all means to protect the Christian inhabitants settled in his territory.

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[3] Leopold von Ranke, *Franzoesische Geschichte* (Berlin, 1957). See Chapter entitled "Das Edikt von Nantes (1598), pp. 296-307.

The decay of the Portuguese Empire in the East, which had started well before the eighteenth century, did not, however, arrest the adventures of European self-seekers from trying their fortunes on Indian soil. Commercial companies were started in Western Europe to trade with India. Their non-trading activities and their intervention in the internal quarrels of Indian princes led eventually to the rise of British power in India. Many British historians are in the habit of saying that the British established an Empire in "absent-mindedness," or that the consolidation of power of the East India Company in India "just happened," but the facts do not lend themselves to such assumptions. Behind this consolidation there was the indomitable will of the generation of Englishmen who had inherited the toughness of the Protestant faith, and although for a time both the French and the British became contestants for power in our country, it was the greater efficiency and the energy of the British traders which finally triumphed. It is very difficult to single out any one special quality of the British because of which they succeeded and for want of which the French failed. But, from the materials now more and more available concerning the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it would appear that not only the superior technical skill but also the talent for organization, so well practised by the British, made it possible for them to establish a kingdom eight thousand miles away from their home, something which had not happened since the conquests of Alexander the Great. The British, who were chiefly interested in trade right up to the eighteenth century, built up an army in order to protect their trade, and this enabled them to intervene militarily in the internal affairs of the Mogul Empire. Although they were not in a strong position to do so in the beginning, they emerged victorious because of the newly acquired sense of discipline which Protestant Christianity had conferred on them. Though it is today a matter of speculation only, it is very probable that if the traders of the East India Company had come into conflict with the Indian States in the seventeenth century, their success would not have been as overwhelming as it became in the eighteenth.

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[4] See my article "Il Problema di Goa nella Sua Vera Realta" in *Incontri Mediterranei* (Rome), January 1962, pp. 17-21.

Here it should be added that in delineating the image which the Indians formed of Europe, we are mostly concerned with the French and the British and very little with the Portuguese. The mark which the Portuguese left on the minds of the Indian people is of no great significance, and as the Portuguese ceased to reflect the main currents of European thought soon after the seventeenth century, our confrontation with Europe really took place with the British and the French, who succeeded in leaving behind influences which have lasted until today. About this impact, a great deal has been written, and there is no doubt that many more studies, both by British and by French historians, will appear in course of time. They will give us an idea as to what the British and the French consider their most lasting contribution so far as their political and military intervention in India is concerned. Some British, as well as French, historians have no doubt exaggerated the influences, moral and political, which they are supposed to have exercised on our people and because of which, according to them, modern India has taken the shape that it has in the twentieth century. However, exaggerations apart, these confrontations of an ancient country inhabited by people with fixed habits and settled ideologies, with countries which in modern parlance would be defined as "developing countries" were indeed of great significance to the emerging world of the eighteenth century. This confrontation led to a radical transformation not only of the gradually evolving mercantile society in Europe, but also our own. Had not Europe at the end of the Dark and the Middle Ages, with a sense of new consciousness, burst into the still more civilized and still more prosperous world of India, and exploited its resources with their superior skill, it is doubtful whether that great historic event, the Industrial Revolution in Europe, could have taken place at all. The formation of capital, to which impetus was given as a result of trade with, and exploitation of, India would have been out of the question had not gold and credit been acquired by the traders of Her Britannic Majesty, and this capital, in its turn, ushered in the era of *Frueh Kapitalismus* (early capitalism) in Europe. The breakthrough which India provided to the merchants and administrators of the City of London was certainly one of the most important factors, if not the most important factor, which led to the Industrial Revolution in England.

II

The question thus arises as to how all this affected our forbears intellectually and morally and how they viewed the situation which arose without anybody wishing that it arise. There was no precedence of such a situation, and it was not brought about by an indigenous agent, and the forces battling against the wall of Hindu self-sufficiency were all extraneous. India had no doubt known military invasions before, but the new kind of all-pervasive penetration into every realm of Indian life which began to take place as a result of the establishment of British settlements in India was something unique and generally puzzling to the Indians of that period. It became all the more so because of the replacement of the indigenous forms of government, almost violent, by a system of which it was very difficult for them to form an idea at that stage. Military aristocracy, which ruled over the greater part of India until the coming of the Europeans, had succeeded, because of its basically nomadic and military nature, in destroying the desire of the Indian people, including the nobles, to take an interest in the political affairs of the country.

Politics, as well as military strategy, had become the concern of a few people, and most people of our country, barring those who lived in a few urban centres, showed indifference to what was going around them. This indifference of the masses of the Indian people afforded the opportunity which the newly "emancipated" people of Britain and France seized avidly, because, in the first place, they had just succeeded in breaking the chains of their own serfdom, to which they had been tied since the fall of the Roman Empire; and, secondly, the new knowledge of men and things, of God and the universe, had added vision to their eyes; also, finally, because of their organizational skill, they turned this opportunity which came to them to their best political and military advantages.

In addition to this, the political conditions in India themselves at the time of the break-up of the Mogul Empire had more or less catapulted the British into a position of authority. One need not go into the journal of Sir Thomas Roe, King James's Ambassador in the Court of Jahangir, in order to prove the decadence which had set in in the ruling classes of India at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Annals and documents of the period abundantly prove this, and they prove also Sir Thomas Roe's statement that "honesty and truth, discipline and civility, were rare qualities amongst the people" who ruled India at that time. It is, of course, equally true that the conditions of India at that time should be judged at two levels, and we have to take into consideration the fact that the evidence before us relates to the conditions prevailing among the ruling classes rather than among the people. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Indian society had sunk to such a low level as probably it had not reached at any other time. As the British historians, Thompson and Garratt, described this period, "the carcase was in a condition to invite the eagles."[5] and as Sir Alfred Lyall earlier put it more aptly and more vividly in his *Rise and Expansion of the British Empire in India:* "The wretched, ordinary people of India had become a masterless multitude swinging to and fro in the political storm and clinging to any power, natural or supernatural, that seemed likely to protect them." The cup of bitterness for the people of India was so full that it was no wonder that the glory and fabulous wealth that India had, and to which so many foreign merchants and adventurers had been attracted, had vanished as a result of the inherent incapacity of the ruling dynasties to govern the country. The conception of government they had brought with them from their primitive, tribal surroundings was totally unsuited to a country of a well-established system of ordered government, and thus the plight of India in the seventeenth century was comparable to that of Rome after its fall from the onslaught of the barbarians of the north. It was in these shattered conditions, wounded both spiritually and physically, that India faced its conquest by the European Powers.

It is necessary here to refer briefly to the image of India which, for instance, had gradually come to be fixed in the European consciousness. This image was neither uniform nor continuous, for, as I have already said, the early European adventurers were moved by the desire to wreak vengeance upon the Moslems and to win, from the Arabs, the rich Indian trade. The Indians for them were contemptible heathens either to be converted to Christianity or to be traded with. But as they began to know more of India, and came into contact with our religious and social thinking, they (i.e. the British and the French) explored the Indian mind, largely out of curiosity. The European mind had already been in a ferment, and the desire to know and investigate the unknown had become a part of the European norm at the time when the British and the French were fighting to establish their overlordship in India. This curiosity of mind led some of them at least to study not only the languages of India but also the Indian classics. As a result, the European view of India and the Indians changed somewhat, and the discovery of ancient Indian literature also had some impact on the educated European mind. Already, late in the eighteenth century, about the time when the French revolutionaries were storming the Bastille, a modest Frenchman called Anquetil-Duperron had translated for the first time the Upanishads, which awakened some curiosity in France. Later, this study was followed up by a few German scholars, and a by-product of their research was the establishment of the science of comparative philology and the development of the theory of the Aryan race. All this created some interest in Indian thinking among the more informed intellectuals of Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century and, in fact, there is some reason to believe that the Romantic movement in literature early in the nineteenth century in Germany and France were somewhat influenced by this discovery. In my analysis in a monograph called *Indiens geistiger Einfluss auf Deutschland*,[6] ("India's influence on Germany"), I have shown that though his influence was not lasting or widespread, yet, at the time of the discovery of the Indian classics, it created quite a lot of enthusiasm in some learned circles. The philosophical schools founded by Kant and Hegel would be unthinkable if the knowledge of Indian philosophy and metaphysics had not become available to them when the minds of these men were being formed. Similarly, expressions such as "Indo-European" and

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[5] Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (Allahabad, 1958), p. 56.

[6] See *Gemeinschaft und Politik* (Bad Godesberg, 1957), pp. 5-18.

"Indo-German" came to be accepted in all seriousness by many scholars in Europe, and they even affected the political thinking of some people, certainly up to the first part of the twentieth century in Europe. It is also held by some that Feurbach's anti-Christian materialism, which led to Marxism and twentieth-century communism, was originally inspired by his studies of Indian philosophy. The concept of Pan-Germanism, many are inclined to think, can be traced to German Indologists, and, similarly, if one accepts the view that the single great influence on Karl Marx was Hegel, it can be said that Marxism also contained, at least in its dialectics, the essential attributes of Indian thinking.

However, the interest in Indian thinking came abruptly to an end towards the end of the nineteenth century, and it ceased to be taken seriously by the British after the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown. The worldwide empire which Britain had been able to establish created the myth of the supremacy of European thinking, and the "dead" civilizations like those of India and China were considered to be subjects fit only for dissertations, without any real message for the present. India became a country for archaeological excavations, and the Indians were regarded merely as museum pieces, so much so that the well-known German Sanskritist, Heinrich Luders,[7] told a German student of Indology, apparently in order to dampen his eagerness to visit India, that India could be better studied in the libraries of German universities than in India itself. Even in Asia, as described by Hu Shih,[8] the Chinese had started a movement as early as the ninth century to free Chinese thinking from Indian influence. In other words, the cult of India and of the Orient in Europe was of a very short duration and those of our scholars who are inclined to attach excessive importance to the works of European Indologists should realize today that except as an exercise in thinking in some academic circles, the influence of Indian thought on modern European society has practically evaporated.[9]

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[7] This was related to me by Professor Ludwig Alsdorf, at present Professor of Indology at the University of Hamburg, West Germany.

[8] See *Konfuzianismus, Sunyatsenismus and Chinesischer Kommunismus*, Grottfried-Karl Kindermann, ed. (Freiburg, 1963), pp. 69-84.

III

When we come to the immediate subject of our discussion, namely, the picture of Europe formed in the minds of the Indian people, we are faced with one great difficulty. We find that because of the century-old alienation of the masses of our people by a military aristocracy which did not know how to administer a country like India, the Indians right up to the eighteenth century remained generally indifferent not only to their immediate surroundings but also to the epoch-making events which kept on happening around them. Thus, in spite of the fact that the religious and cultural life of the country continued in some cases quite undisturbed, the political thinking sank to such a low level that it is difficult to find any reliable records of popular thinking during this period which would give some indication of popular reaction to these happenings. Probably, in the course of time, when more letters and documents giving expression to popular feelings about these events have been unearthed, we will be in a position to reconstruct better the earlier appreciation of, or opposition to, the Europeans who burst upon our national scene. As India possessed, even at that period, a fairly good stratum of intellectuals, and as literacy was higher in India than in most European countries, it is likely that some at least among them had given vent to their feelings, and these, when retrieved, will furnish us with valuable clues to real Indian thinking during these periods. As we are concerned here only with the nineteenth century, all that we can do is to use materials which have come down to us from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, in order to discuss the views formed by the Indians of the nineteenth century on the Europe and Europeans of their time. It is necessary to add that for a long time the Indians did not distinguish one European country from another or one European people from another, although because of Franco-British rivalry in India, the Indian princes had learnt quite early to use the one against the other. We shall, therefore, include Britain in our concept of Europe as we were concerned with it in the nineteenth century much more than with any other country, although our knowledge of other European countries during the century was constantly widening.

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[9] Ibid.

One of the most intelligent observers of the Indian scene of the eighteenth century was Ananda Ranga Pillai, whom Frederick Price, in his introduction to Pillai's *Diary*[10] from 1736 to 1761, has referred to as the Indian Samuel Pepys. Pillai was born on 30 March 1709 at Perambur. He went to Pondicherry in 1716 with his father and received employment with the French in 1726. Dupleix appointed him as his *dubash* in 1747, and the French considered this post to be equivalent to that of a courtier. Pillai has left behind a unique record of his inmost thoughts and reflections. An extremely able and level-headed Indian, though interested mostly in the immediate affairs which concerned him, Pillai has given expression freely and intelligently to his views on the character and methods of the people he came across daily, and these included both the Indians and the French. Frederick Price in his introduction refers to Pillai's description of men and things "as vividly life-like," and says that there are passages "which were startling, some in pathos and others in their shrewdness." Living side by side with the French, sharing their confidence and their difficulties and very often their secrets and their quarrels, Pillai looked upon the French not very differently from other human beings, and does not seem to have been very much impressed either by their habits, morals, or their civilization. Used to divide men into two categories, that is, men possessing power and men without power, Pillai's relations with the French were determined by the fact that the French wielded power in Pondicherry. A man of vast common sense, and certainly not a man of letters in the modern sense, though the style of writing was simple, Pillai's dealings with the French were mostly in the realms of buying and selling and keeping accounts, and he, therefore, did not care much to analyse them or their character in the way we are used to now in the late twentieth century. Like many Indians of his time, he took the French for granted, and treated them with consideration, respect, and servility when they were in power, and with indifference, contempt, and even brutality when they did not possess power or money. The picture of the French which emerges from his *Diary* is that of a people who knew how to endear themselves to others, although, according to Pillai, they lost heart very quickly in face of obstacles. They were good to him, but his main worry seemed to have been that other Indian members of his family tried all the time to bring him into disrepute with the French. Thus Pillai's *Diary*, though exhaustive, informative, and extremely interesting from the point of view of the social history of the period, does not give us an insight into the minds of Pillai's contemporaries. Nor do we find in it a critical analysis of the various forces, intellectual and moral, which were contending for the conquest of the Indian soul. In order, therefore, to understand the effects of the impact which European penetration had made on Indian national life, we have to rely on the writings of Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) rather than on Pillai's *Diary*; for one thing, the writings of the Raja were of a much later date and they reflected, therefore, more mature thinking. The Raja was also a more trained thinker, and he was also the first among the Indians to have studied seriously Christian theology and contemporary literature, which enabled him to offer comments and criticisms on various aspects of European civilization in an intelligent manner. There is no doubt that many others in other parts of India have done so, but the Raja with his eclectic mind had probably more clearly grasped the significant changes that were taking place in the ways of thinking of the Indian people as a result of the British victory at Plassey than many others who had not yet fully realized the implications of this battle and this victory. In fact, Rammohun Roy is the first Indian with what we would call a modern analytic mind, and it is owing to him that a more scientific assessment of the forces which were at work in Indian society began to be made. Before him, some slight attempts had been made to judge the social consequences of the settlement of the Europeans on Indian soil, but the way Raja Rammohun Roy accepted the challenge of Christianity and European civilization is of importance to us because it was he who, for the first time, succeeded in separating the non-essentials of European civilization and held out the essential features of the European character and theology before us.[11] In many discourses and tracts, beginning with the famous *Abridgement of the Vedant*,[12] he explained Indian religious concepts "bearing such marks of clear and enlightened views and of extensive and accurate learning."[13] That is to say, until Rammohun Roy appeared on the Indian scene, the Indians of those days did not seem fully to know how to interpret or blend the new categories of thinking which were pouring into our country and which tended totally to perplex them. The Hindus, during the long period of Moslem rule in India, had gradually retired into their own selves, so to say, and had begun to look upon customs and rituals as religion, forgetting thereby the true nature of Hinduism. They had been puzzled by the new social and moral values which the foreigners had brought to India, together with their cunning commercialism and brutal ambitions. Used only to the aggressive military aristocracy of the mediaeval type, and without any knowledge either of the country or of the social and political background of the British and the French, the Indians of the eighteenth century in their bewilderment continued to live and think in the same way as they had done before. Raja Rammohun Roy, because of his extensive reading, knowledge of languages, and friendship with the Serampore missionaries, began to realize the immense importance of these new ideas for revitalizing a static society which had been immune to new ideas for

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[10] *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, Dubash to Joseph Francois Dupleix, Knight of the Order of St. Michael and Governor of Pondicherry* (Madras, 1904). The original text, which was in Tamil, was translated into English by order of the Government of Madras, and the book was edited by Frederick Price and Rangachari. The editors referred to the book as a "Record of Matters, Political, Historical, Social and Personal."

[11] See, in this connexion, the chapter entitled "Fallen among Christians" in Iqbal Singh, *Rammohun Roy* (Bombay, 1958), pp. 151-208.

[12] *The Abridgement of the Vedant* was published in London in 1817.

[13] Quotation is from a letter written to Roy by the Rev. Dr Henry Ware, Professor of Divinity at the Harvard College, dated 24 April 1823. Quoted in Iqbal Singh, n. 11.

centuries. He came to this conclusion by a process of thinking kindled within him by the polemical discussions he had had with the missionaries at Serampore, but besides that, the Raja was also the first enlightened Indian of the nineteenth century whose mind, like the minds of the men of the European Renaissance, had been lit up with the new truths which had transformd the mediaeval European world. Dr Brojendranath Seal is reputed to have said of Rammohun that the Raja was like Bacon, Voltaire, or Volney, "a precursor, an archetype, a prophet of coming humanity." The reason, however, why the Raja differed from all his contemporaries was perhaps his familiarity with the system of new logic, *navya nyaya*, a school of thinking which had flourished in Eastern India in the eighteenth century. Moreover, the Raja's experience as an administrator and his friendship with an enlightened Englishman—Digby—gradually unfolded to him the immense value of the new knowledge for his countrymen, a knowledge which had inflamed the European mind of the eighteenth century and with which no Indian had much acquaintance until then.[14] Then, as time went on, the Raja, influenced by what we might call the *zeitgeist*, became more and more attracted to the liberal ideas which spread all over the world after the French Revolution and about which Rammohun seems to have read a great deal when he was employed as *khas munshi* to the Registrar at Murshidabad in 1803.[15] His enthusiasm for the heady doctrine of the French Revolution was such that on his way to England in 1830, when the ship in which he was travelling reached the harbour of Cape of Good Hope, he went on board a French ship anchored there because he wished to pay homage from India, his own country, to the great French nation, which had raised aloft throughout the world the banner of revolution against all forms of slavery.[16] While making this effort, he slipped and badly injured his legs and remained lame for the remainder of his life. In other words, the Raja's view of Europe was largely based on his conviction that Europe (and not just Britain) was where some of the most important issues concerning mankind were being decided. And, thus, when he went to Europe, he did not go there as a casual visitor, gathering impressions or admiring places of interest. Even before his departure for Europe, he was already committed or, as we would say today, engaged, because the Raja stood for progress, for social reform, and above all for the liberty of human beings from political tyranny of every kind. The measure of his greatness and his liberal faith can be judged from the fact that he thought of quitting Britain if the British Parliament did not pass the Great Reform Bill, which was being discussed in public and in Parliament during his stay in England. When the Second Reform Bill was rejected by the House of Lords and the Third Bill was presented before Parliament, Ramohun Roy looked upon the issue as important not only for Britain but for the entire mankind. In a letter he wrote to one Mrs Woodford, he said that the struggles were between justice and injustice and between right and wrong, and not merely between reformers and anti-reformers. In another letter to his friend Rathbone, he wrote: "As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, I would renounce my connection with this country, England, I refrained from writing to you or to any other friends in Liverpool until I knew the result. Thank Heaven, I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow-subjects, and heartily rejoice that I have the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay, of the whole world."[17] Similarly, writing to a friend on the same subject, he said: "The struggles are not merely between the Reformers and anti-Reformers, but between liberty and oppression throughout the world; between justice and injustice; and between right and wrong. But ...we clearly perceive that liberal principles in politics and religion have been long gradually but steadily gaining ground, notwithstanding the position and obstinacy of despots and bigots."[18]

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[14] Iqbal Singh says: "Quite apart from any material considerations which bound Digby to Rammohun, and obviously there were some, there was between them a bond of genuine understanding." See n. 11, p. 114.

[15] As Iqbal Singh points out, Rammohun was not a rare genius. He "seemed to be a self-made man in the making." Ibid., p. 64.

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[16] C.F. Andrews and Girija K. Mookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of the Indian National Congress* (London, 1938), p. 16.

Thus we see that the first Indian who ushered into our country the modern age judged Europe not by its brutal treatment of underdeveloped countries but by the values of human liberty which it preached abroad but practised only at home.

The Raja was well-read and well-informed about the political and social reform movements in all the countries of Europe. He was also one of the very few Indians to have expressed frank views on France—a country with which India's connexion had been severed as a result of the establishment of British suzerainty over India. The letter he wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, protesting against the rule requiring a passport to cross to France from Britain gives not only an insight into the mind of this great Indian thinker, but it incidentally makes the first suggestion anywhere in the world for an international organization like the United Nations. The Raja, who felt very offended that his liberty to travel to France should be

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[17] *Rammohun Roy : The Man and His Work*, Centenary Publicity Booklet (Calcutta, 1933), p. 60.

[18] Ibid.

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restricted, wrote in this letter that an international organization should be established "in order to bring all the nations together so that their quarrels and misunderstandings should be settled amicably with the instrument of such an organisation and that liberty of travel and freedom of thinking should be enshrined in a charter by this organization." He felt particularly outraged about these restrictions because he had a great admiration for France. In the course of the same letter he referred to France as "a country so favoured by Nature and so richly adorned by the cultivation of arts and sciences and above all blessed by the possession of a free constitution."[19] It has also been said that in connexion with his visit to France he called on Prince Talleyrand, who was at that time the French Ambassador in Britain. When he actually arrived in France, he was presented to King Louis Philippe on 14 October 1832. As a matter of fact, he was the first Indian to have impressed the French intellectuals by his knowledge, his liberal ideas, and the distinction of his intellect. As a result, he was nominated a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris on 5 July 1834. The Swiss economist and historian, Sismondi, writing in the *Revue Encyclopedique* in 1834, paid a tribute to him by saying that "Raja Rammohun communicated to the Hindus all the progress that he thought has been made among the Europeans." It was about this great faith in the Europe of the nineteenth century that, on the occasion of his death centenary celebrations in 1933, Tagore said that although we all knew that in all the countries of Europe people believed in witches and in superstition, as a result of which hundreds of men, women, and children had been burnt to death, yet "the Raja knew that this blind superstition was not the only aspect of Europe. He knew that it would be unjust to try to understand Europe by counting the number of people whom the Europeans had sent to stakes out of superstitious beliefs."[20]

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[19] Ibid., Appendix A, pp. 116-18.

IV

Although it is true that the Raja was the first Indian to have understood the new current of thought in Europe and then to become a living example of that faith in his life and in his writings, it was left to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) to make this new knowledge and the scientific spirit of investigation a part of Indian thinking with a view to bringing about a social and intellectual upheaval in India in the nineteenth century.

Vidyasagar lived long enough to meet Swami Vivekananda. Although little known outside his native Bengal, he did probably much more to popularize European ideas of the eighteenth century than Rammohun Roy himself because, instead of trying to create a schism within the Hindu society, he animated it with new thoughts from within, and he did this first by making the language an instrument of clear and logical expression and then by inculcating the spirit of enquiry and reasoning upon his readers. In Bengal, as elsewhere, the language had still retained some of the characteristics of mediaeval style and form, the result being that the poverty of thought was often concealed by a flowery style and high-sounding adjectives. Vidyasagar showed by his writing that the former method had become quite unsuitable for expressing ideas cogently, clearly, and in a scientific way. It is not known how exactly Vidyasagar's mind was formed and what were the successive steps in thinking which led to the freedom of spirit which he attained and which made him one of the most remarkable Indians of the nineteenth century. There is no doubt that the man himself was somewhat unique for the period in which he was born, and there are stories about his toughness and courage which single him out as a rare type for the early nineteenth century. But it must have been finally his contact and friendship with the English factors at the Fort William College which inflamed his mind and gave him an insight into the character and thinking which these people embodied in themselves. In fact, one of the first books he published in 1849 was a biography of "Great Europeans" based on the English version of National Biographies of Robert William Chambers, which were then available just to a limited number of people in Calcutta.[21] In his Introduction to this book, Vidyasagar said: "If we discuss the life stories of these great men we inform ourselves about the customs, morals, the history and the habits of those of the countries they were born in during these periods." He then added: "It has to be admitted that the pursuit of such subjects which bring in such rich and valuable results should be considered to be the chief function of education." The biographies Vidyasagar had chosen were those of men like Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Herschel, Grotius, and such Europeans as had just begun to explore the mysteries of Nature, and Vidyasagar wanted their scientific knowledge and scientific spirit to be made known to his contemporaries. He himself was converted to their way of thinking which he considered to be superior to the Indian way of thinking, and he was eager that the minds of his countrymen should be permeated with this spirit. Speaking of this new approach to knowledge shown by Vidyasagar, S. K. Chatterjee, Brojendranath Bandopadhyaya, and Sajani Kanta Das say in their Introduction to *Vidyasagar Granthabali*[22]: "The publication of this book[23] in the middle of the 19th century can be considered to be the first scientific discovery of the unscientific Bengalis."

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[20] Ibid.

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[21] Ishwar Chandra Sarma, *Jiban Charit* (Calcutta, 1876). The book was first published in 1849.

They further add: "All this appears to us today quite commonplace and quite normal as a result of habits formed during a century, but there is no doubt that to Vidyasagar's contemporaries this scientific introduction of Sanskrit grammar appeared to be as much a novelty as the discovery of America by Columbus or the propagation of the theory of gravitation by Newton."[24] Vidyasagar thus became, and probably still remains, the first Indian to have adopted the clear, concise method of English prose in writing an Indian language, and he thus gave us for the first time a style of writing whose main purpose was the attainment of clarity of thought as well as of expression. Moreover, as evidenced in his *Banglar Itihas*, specially in the second volume, he also exercised great independence of judgement in describing contemporary events, and it speaks volumes for his courage and character that he did not hesitate to attack Warren Hastings for having concocted evidence in order to hang Nand Kumar. And, although, in the introduction of his history of Bengal, Vidyasagar claimed that his book was largely an adaptation of the last nine chapters of Masterman's *History of Bengal* in English, yet his analysis of such political events of the period as Nand Kumar's trial shows that he did not strictly conform to the conclusions arrived at by Master-

[22] The collected works of Vidyasagar were edited and published by the above-named three scholars in Calcutta in *Chaitra* 1346 or in A.D. 1939.

[23] The book referred to is *Sanskrita Vyakaraner Upakramanika*; it was published in 1851 in Calcutta.

[24] The introduction to the *Granthabali*, which was written in Bengali, has been literally translated into English. The passage appears on p. 10 of the *Granthabali*.

man. Besides, Masterman did not have the scholar's integrity to tell the truth about one of the most ghastly injustices of the period for which Warren Hastings was responsible. In fact, Vidyasagar, as he acknowledged in his introduction, consulted and used other sources and materials as well as other books in writing *Banglar Itihas*, and it became thus the first scientific and chronological history of a part of India written in an Indian language. Not only that, the book was written in a style and form which even today can be taken as a model of historical writing. The correctness of facts, the exactitude of method, and the precision of style which he employs can compare favourably even with Macaulay's *History of England.*

In Vidyasagar, therefore, we have an Indian of the early nineteenth century who formed an image of Europe and described it as best he could as a result of personal contact with a few Britishers who turned out to be above the average and familiarity with the few English publications he had read. Being an intellectual and a man of wide learning, the European world appeared to him as based on high thinking, relentless logic, and pure reason. It is also quite likely that Vidyasagar had read Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*, and there is no doubt that the writings of some of the great French thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were known to him as they were becoming slowly available to the *elite* of Calcutta. The Christian missionaries in Calcutta had also begun to publish tracts to convert Hindus to Christianity, and though some of these tracts contained attacks on Hinduism, the formulation of the attacks was so conceived that it offered a constant challenge to the Indian intelligentsia to use the same method of argumentation to counter these attacks. Raja Rammohun Roy had already done so in 1805 in his monograph entitled *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahhidin* ("Gift to Monotheists")[25] and, as Iqbal Singh rightly points out, the real interest of the book "resides in the highly original line of reasoning through which certain conclusions are reached rather than in the conclusions themselves."[26] In other words, even before Vidyasagar, the Raja had already broken away from the method of reasoning of the theologians of classical Islam, very much in vogue at that time among the Indian scholars. Thus, by the time Vidyasagar became a teacher at the Fort William College, he must have read or heard of Rammohun Roy's writings. It was, however, his own mind—neat, precise and tidy—which mirrored the new world which was emerging after centuries of confusion. That is to say, his mind was the main crucible where these values were tested, sorted out, and clarified. The static state of affairs which India had reached after the break-up of the Mogul Empire had created all over the country an intellectual barrenness unknown in other periods of India's history. We owe it to Vidyasagar that he was able, largely by his own mental efforts, to free himself from his own depressing surroundings and to grasp the political and moral significance of the forcible impact of Europe on the sterile Indian mind. In this way, at this critical moment of history, Vidyasagar was able to give a new direction to our people and to dispel somewhat the sense of despair which had descended on them towards the end of the eighteenth century. It is true that Vidyasagar had no personal knowledge of the country or the countries from which the new ideas had come, nor did he ever become in habit, speech or dress like those Britishers whom he taught, and from whom he learnt about the dynamism of European thinking; and we do not know what would have been his reaction to these ideas had he been more fully acquainted with them. But the fact remains that Vidyasagar was able to absorb "the scientific and critical spirit of the newcomers" and thus pave the way for the movement of social reforms which swept our country in the nineteenth century. He did it, however, without ever losing pride in being an Indian, although people familiar with his robust courage, undogmatic prose writings, and nobility of heart used to say that Vidyasagar was really a European in Indian garb—in Bengali *dhoti*. (The poet Madhusudan Dutta described him as a man possessing English character and the Indian generosity of mind.) He was, of course, the pioneer of social reform movements like widow remarriage, abolition of the suttee, and many others, but he was something more. He acted as a catalytic force in the dying society of the early nineteenth century and was bold enough to admit that a great deal of our traditional thinking was false; and what is more, he did not fear to expose its fallacy by injecting into it the new scientific approach to problems of society and history which he had learnt within an astonishingly short time from the European merchants and missionaries.

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[25] According to Iqbal Singh. this first brief literary effort of the Raja "stands out as one of the most, if not the most, significant publications in India during the first half of the 19th century." See n. 10, p. 68.

[26] Ibid., p. 70.

V

The most prominent name after Vidyasagar in the crusade for the propagation of the new knowledge, to my mind, is that of Justice Dwarkanath Mitra (1833-1874), who was one of the first among the people of this generation to have been deeply influenced by the Utilitarian theory of the two Mills and that of positivism of Comte. His biographer wrote of him that "Mitra believed only in that what one could see directly,"[27] and as a jurist and constitutional lawyer he emphasized the importance of the legal basis of human society. Already, all over India, second thoughts were being given to all the new ideas which in the early nineteenth century had so overwhelmingly impressed people like Rammohun Roy and Vidyasagar. Researches on India's past had revealed many aspects of a dynamic and highly developed civilization in ancient India. The socio-religious movement started by the Raja had, under the influence of Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) become increasingly a pietist movement similar to movements of this kind within the Hindu religion. Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) claimed blatantly that Hinduism was enough. And, above all, after the brutal suppression of the Revolt of 1857, the imperialist character of the British domination of India had betrayed the ugly visage of European civilization. The Industrial Revolution in Europe, which had led to the movement of expansion of the European Powers to the less developed countries of Asia and Europe, raised doubts in the minds of thinking people about the moral and intellectual values contained in European civilization. This doubt is aptly expressed in a letter which was written to historian Ramdas Sen by the German Sanskritist Max Muller in which he urged the Indians to

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[27] Amritlal Basu, *A Collection of Memoirs of Six Distinguished Patriots* (Calcutta, 1884), p. 54.

> accept all that is good in Europe but because of that do not be European; you are the descendants of Manu, children of Bharat who has produced such jewels; you are the seekers after truth and the worshippers of Him, the Unknown, Whom everyone worships with justice, honesty and Whom everyone tries to please. In one word, you remain what you are.[28]

This advice did not remain unheeded, for already Indian writers and thinkers were publishing severely critical estimates of European civilization and culture and specially of the European policy of exploitation of an economically less developed country like India. Closer contact with the Britishers and their homeland destroyed much of the illusion which people had formed without being in England. So much so that at a later date, in 1880, Tagore was to give expression to this disappointment in the following terms:

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[28] Ibid.

> I had thought that the island of England was so small and the inhabitants so dedicated to learning that, before I arrived here, I expected that the country from one end to other would echo and re-echo with the lyrical songs of Tennyson; and I had also thought that wherever I might be in this narrow island, I would hear constantly Gladstone's oratory, the explanation of the Vedas by Max Mueller, the scientific truth of Tindall, the profound thoughts of Carlyle and the philosophy of Bain.[29] I was under the impression that wherever I would go I would find the old and the young drunk with the pleasure of "intellectual"[30] enjoyment. But I have been very disappointed in this.[31]

But it was not Tagore alone who was disenchanted with Europe. The young poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873), who started writing poetry in English and left India in order to settle down finally in England, reacted also violently to European civilization because of many similar experiences in Europe. He became later the spearhead of attack against those who, in the name of modernism, brought their own country and its tradition and culture into disrepute. Dutta became

[29] Tagore here speaks of Alex Bain (1818-1903), the Scottish philosopher and the author of *Manual of Mental and Moral Science*, who was in vogue among the intellectuals of this period.

[30] In the original text in Bengali the word "intellectual" appears in English. The translation of this passage from Bengali to English is mine.

[31] Rabindranath Thakur, *Europe Prabasir Patra* (Calcutta, 1961), pp. 20-21—first published in Calcutta, 25 October 1881.

afterwards one of the foremost writers in Bengali and took to satirizing the young who took pleasure in running down their country and their people. Among the many satirical writings he wrote must be mentioned the play which came out in 1860 and was entitled *Is This What Is Called Civilization*?[32] He ruthlessly exposed those young men whose modernism consisted of all the vices of the European society without its virtues and who are like the principal character Naba in this farcical play, who says, while presiding over a phoney association called "Society of the Waves of Knowledge" or "Jnana Tarangini Sabha": "Gentlemen, this country of ours is just like a big prison, but this room where we are meeting tonight is our hall of liberty or the mansion of freedom. Here everybody can and does whatever he wishes. Therefore, gentlemen, join, all of you, in the name of freedom and let us enjoy ourselves and do whatever we like."[33] Similarly, in dramas and epic poems, Madhusudan came again and again to the theme of the impact of European civilization on the Indian mind, and it would not be wrong to call him the leader of the first group of thinkers in the middle of the nineteenth century who began an appraisal of Europe without losing objectivity and certainty and in a spirit of understanding. In his great epic poem, *Meghanad Badh* ("The Slaying of Meghanad"), he no doubt extolled India as the mother of great civilizations and the source of human culture, but at the same time made his readers aware of the fact that the people in Europe, as a result of their stronger will, their spirit of social discipline, and their inquisitive mind had greatly enhanced the boundary of existing human knowledge and that they had succeeded in creating a broad-based human civilization. His image of Europe was thus more restrained, more critical, and more sober. In other words, we see in his writings already an intelligent and intellectual approach to the problem of adjustment to the new situation which had arisen as a result of the firm establishment of British rule in India. He was in a way the pioneer of the movement for the assertion of the Indian personality which later took shape in the social and religious upheavals of the sixties of the nineteenth century. In fact, in some ways, Madhusudan Dutta was a kind of forerunner of men like Dayananda and Vivekananda (1863-1902), who, in their assessment of the European civilization, emphasized its differences with the Indian civilization by pointing out the superiority of Indian culture. Dayananda's movement later led to Hindu revivalism, and Vivekananda also succeeded in arousing Hindu consciousness by pointing to the excellence of Hindu thought and achievements.

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[32] Madhusudan Dutta, *Ekey Ki Boley Sabhyata* ? (Calcutta, 1860).

[33] Ibid., p. 30.

Dayananda's views on Europe, though interesting, are somewhat irrelevant to this study because in some respects his was a closed mind in spite of the fact that it was essentially the liberal Hindu mind. His postulates were also Hindu in their essence, but his conclusions suffered from being one-sided. Slogans like "Back to the Bible" or "Back to the Vedas" assumed that human society is stationary, and Dayananda, by rejecting the idea of progress inherent in human development, denied at the same time the life-giving forces which had moulded Hindu society from time to time. On the other hand, his doctrine of infallibility of the Hindu religion ignored the historical forces which had shaped the Hindu and other religions. The fact that the religions had survived because of the changes wrought in them, however undeniable, did not find much support in Dayananda. That is why the Arya Samaj movement did not become a catalytic force like the movement started by Luther within the Christian Church. The Lutheran dissidence later enriched the Church and increased its prestige; in contrast, though the Arya Samaj became a powerful political force in the country, it failed to move Hindu society forward. The reasons are historical. Dayananda reflected in his thinking the increasing divergence and the sense of opposition between the Indian and European societies, largely because of political and economic reasons. The British attitude after 1858 of considering the Indians as a subject people had destroyed the early attraction which the Indians had felt towards European liberalism. As the new economic and social conditions in Britain (the product of the Industrial Revolution) outdistanced Indian conditions by a century, the British looked upon the whole of India as a depressed area and the Indians as incapable of bettering their conditions. This created a gulf between the two peoples which went on widening, and we see in Dayananda's writings all the signs of this schism. In fact, Dayananda did away with all the hesitations which characterized Rammohun Roy, Vidyasagar, and others and opted for Hindu nationalism which was to develop later into the forms of nationalism we have come to know in the twentieth century.

VI

But nationalism that was growing was not only ideologically anti-European, but already towards the middle of the century it had begun looking inwards. In the absence of political theorists of indigenous origin, it is true that this nationalism began to acquire religious overtones, but its political roots were equally important. In my book, *The Rise and Growth of the Congress*, which I wrote together with the late C.F. Andrews in 1938,[35] I have given an account of various political

[35] See n. 16.

institutions of the nineteenth century which concretized the "nationalist feeling" into a "nationalist movement" leading to the foundation of the Congress in 1885. (In modern jargon, I would have said that it escalated into a nationalist movement!) But when it became a movement it also ceased to be purely religious because Indian awareness of the economic drain of the country and its political subjection raised the movement at once into a socio-political struggle for power and economic betterment of the people. This was preceded by the slow development of a national creed, based for the first time on the conception of an idealized motherland, reminiscent of the glorification of *la patrie* at the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution. By nature, and because of the political circumstances, this creed grew in defiance of Britain and the West, partly because of steady impoverishment of the country and partly because of the profound disappointment felt by the new *èlite* towards the pattern of relationship between India and Britain. Indians who visited Britain and other European countries carried back impressions which did not correspond to the views which they had formed about Europe while in India. On the other hand, on account of the increasing naval and military power of Britain and her dominant position in the world, the earlier attitude of the British towards India, marked by consideration and even respect for the India of upper classes, had undergone a radical transformation. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British in India began to look upon themselves as members of a ruling and superior race and not merely the members of a trading company interested in furthering their trade. The differences in habits and ways of living, which were accentuated by the greater prosperity and modernization of Britain and the progressive deterioration of the standard of living of the Indians, created rigid barriers between the two races. Furthermore, the consolidation of British rule had been effected by continued wars in all parts of India and the result had been that the people all over India had suffered greatly. The few well-to-do in metropolitan cities like Madras, Bombay, or Calcutta were also feeling restless because of the new attitude of condescension and arrogance of the British towards Indians of all classes. Thus, by 1860, the image of Europe which was gradually being formed in the Indian mind was an image no longer of adulation but one of restraint and one which admitted both criticism and rejection of some of the values which Western civilization represented. The reflection of this attitude is best illustrated in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894). Chatterjee, who mirrored within himself the feeling of discontent and displeasure of the small but growing educated middle class of India, was able to cut the European image to size by proving that India and its age-old civilization, although at a decadent stage, was not inferior to the other civilizations of the world. But he was the product of the new Indo-British culture, and in his writings, we notice, therefore, the influence of rationalistic thinking of the eighteenth century. He used also the methodology of the rationalists, and his writings, in addition to their nobility of style and form, reveal also a rich and balanced mind, quite capable of grasping the historical forces which were shaping the future of the country. He was also a prolific writer, not only of novels, but also of essays and literary criticisms and few writers of this period havo used so many different forms of writing to interpret, explain, and criticize the nature of the Indian civilization and the Indian religion to a public more and more avid to know and understand the new relationship which was developing between India and Europe. Being painfully aware of the shortcomings of his countrymen and the low state of their "morale" and social conditions, Chatterjee almost always adopted a sober and balanced view of Europe with an undertone of regret that his own country was so far behind others in these material and spiritual things which make life worth living. This sadness of his found beautiful expression in his review of a book by an Indian on Europe in which the author had compared some of the countries of Europe with his own.[36] Writing in the literary journal of which he was the editor about the need of such books, he said: "As a result of our English education we have come to know a great deal about England from English books and we have also seen many Englishmen in our country. Still our knowledge of England is like the knowledge of the blind who wanted to form an idea of the elephant merely by touching it. We read English books written by Englishmen, and England painted by them is England as seen through English eyes. What England will look like through our Indian eyes, we are not able to see in English publications."[37] Referring to Taine's book on England and the French view of the English, he said:

> The English and the French are very much alike. When seen through our eyes, both of them seem to belong to the same country, the same race, and the same religion. Both of them seem to us also to have the same sort of education, the same manners, the same customs, and the same nature. If, however, the image of England painted by a Frenchman seems to us to be so new, then one can easily imagine what difference there will be in an image of England described by an Indian.[38]

Discussing the favourable impression which England had made on him. Chatterjee admitted:

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[36] *Three Years in Europe*: *Being Extracts from Letters sent from Europe* (Calcutta, 1872). It was published anonymoustly, but it was later discovered that the author was Romesh Chandra Dutta.

[37] *Banga Darshan* (Calcutta, 1872), pp. 870-3.

[38] Ibid., pp. 870-3.

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> There is no doubt that Europe should appear so wonderful to our people. One need not doubt also that a country, namely England, a handful of whose people after crossing the seas have performed new wonders every day five thousand miles away from their home, should undoubtedly be considered to be an admirable country by us. It is, therefore, natural that unless one is prejudiced, one is most likely to consider England in a favourable light.[39]

And, then, regretfully, he added: "When one goes abroad one does not necessarily like everything there. We were, therefore, very curious to hear about the things we do not find agreeable in a foreign country. Unfortunately, this book does not satisfy this desire."[40] And, finally, he explained why he would have liked the author to have found something unpleasant in European countries. He wrote:

> Why do we want to hear about things we do not like abroad? We do not know if we will be able to explain it. We Bengalis are considered to be *quantite negligible* compared to great nations like the English. Compared to the English, we possess nothing which is praiseworthy and nothing which is good. We do not know if this assessment is really correct, but having been told this every day and again and again, we have come to believe them to be true. This belief is really no good.[41]

He continued:

> If we do not notice some qualities in our people which are superior to others and other countries, then our love for our country will undergo some diminution. It is, therefore, natural that we always wish to hear whether we are superior at least in some respects to the most civilized nations on earth. If we could have heard a little about such praise—pleasing to our ears—from this well-educated and discriminating writer, we would

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[39] Ibid., p. 871. [40] Ibid. [41] Ibid., p. 872.

have been indeed very happy. It is, however, not the fault of the author that we did not hear about this praise; alas, it is our fate![42]

VII

Among Chatterjee's contemporaries and even before him there were quite a few who have also left behind their reflections on the contemporary scene and their views on the British and the Europeans. It is not possible to deal in detail with their various works; nor does it suffice merely to mention their names for some of them, like Satyendranath Tagore in his *Ingrez Charitra* ("English Character"), or Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in his *Travels*, have given us the fruits of their mature thinking on Indo-European relations in the nineteenth century. Girish Chandra Bose in his *Europe-Jatri* ("A Traveller to Europe"), or much earlier, Ram Comul Sen in his preface to the English Dictionary published at Serampore in 1831, and Jogendranath Bose in his life of Michael Madhusudan Dutt have intelligently described the nature of this relationship and the effects, both good and bad, which this relationship had on the Indian society of the nineteenth century.

From among them, I have chosen Rabindranath Tagore's *Europe Prabasir Patra* ("Letters from a Traveller in Europe") as one of the most significant books on the subject not only because we find in it a more mature analysis and appreciation of European ideas or European landscape, literature, peoples, and architecture, but also because Tagore embodied very truly the spirit of the epoch.[43] He was of course a writer all through his life on many aspects of Western civilization, but the fascination of this book and these letters lies in the fact that they were written by Tagore when he was only eighteen years old. They

[42] Ibid., p. 873.

[43] Thakur, n. 31.

were written between 1878 and 1890 and published in the form of a book under this title on 25 October 1881. Not all the letters were meant for publication in the journal *Bharati* edited at that time by Tagore's eldest brother, Dwijendranath Tagore, who also became well known later as an excellent interpreter of Indian philosophy. Dwijendranath took exception to some of the remarks made by Rabindranath in his ninth and tenth letters and started a controversy in the journal, which again offers excellent reading and demonstrates the state of public debate at that time on the merits of Western influence on Indian society. At any rate, to my knowledge, no language possesses anything like Tagore's letters from Europe written by a young man of eighteen, yet in observation and in expression so rich and so readable. This book is, as Tagore observed in his introduction to another book of travels in the West[44] published in 1936, the first Bengali book written in what is known as "Spoken Bengali."[45]

Tagore left for England on 20 September 1878 from Bombay on board *s.s. Poona* in the company of his elder brother, Satyendranath Tagore, who, in addition to being the first Indian in the Indian Civil Service, was also the author of a book on the English character, to which I have already referred. Although he became seasick on the very first day of his being on board the ship, yet the first letter he wrote shows how well he was aware of his surroundings and how sharp was his criticism of his fellow-passengers and their peculiarities. He discovered even a real John Bull among them, "an Englishman whose body is like a palm tree; whose moustaches are like a broom; whose hair as straight as that of a porcupine; whose face is as flat as an earthen pot; the expression of whose eyes is like that of a fish,"[46] and as soon as young Rabindranath sighted him on the deck, he felt sick within himself and ran away as quickly as he could. In spite of the fact that he was forced to remain in the cabin for six days because of the roughness of the sea, Rabindranath seemed to have enjoyed himself vastly by observing the idiosyncrasies and foibles of his fellow-passengers. He makes great fun of lack of beauty of English women on the boat, one of whom was like a "geometric line or length without breadth"[47] and "then there was Mr *T* who never spoke but only lectured and spoiled the fun."

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[44] *Pashchatya-Bhraman* (Calcutta, 1936).

[45] This refers to the controversy which arose as a result of the insistence of Rabindranath on writing in "kathya bhasha" or the language spoken by the ordinary people in their daily conversations rather than in "sadhu bhasa," the language, the style and the form used by the pandits, which corresponded far more vigorously to the grammatical form of Sanskrit. Tagore held the view, which he demonstrated, that a language expanded and became dynamic only when it freed itself from the limitations put on it by the grammarians and scholastics.

It took five days for them to travel from Aden to Suez, and from Suez they went to Alexandria by train to embark on *s.s. Mongolia*, which took them to Brindisi in five days and then finally to Europe.

When the boat arrived at Brindisi at night about 1 o'clock, Tagore was thrilled and excited, and tried to write down his first impressions of landing on European soil.

> Thus it was the first time that I trod European soil. You know how imaginative I am, and I had already thought that as soon as I would arrive in Europe, a wonderful sight would appear in front of me. Everyone was, therefore, rather surprised when I said later that I did not find Europe something so striking or new.[48]

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[46] Thakur, n. 31, p. 8

[47] Ibid., p. 6. The English words "length without breadth" appear in the original text.

[48] Ibid., p. 14.

Brindisi was like any small town anywhere in the world. There were a few buildings made of brick, and beggars in the streets, and a few people here and there and some in the cafes. Only the Italian women inspired him, for in their faces he noticed the eyes and glances of the women of India. They had black hair, black eyebrows, and black eyes, and their faces seemed attractive, and even the way they walked and carried themselves moved him a great deal. And on the train to Paris, the poet suddenly became aware of the gorgeous landscape of Italy and he wrote exaltingly of vineyards lining the railway tracks, and the mountains and the rivers and the lakes and the picturesque small cottages and fields in moonlight as the train roared through the night to France. Crossing from Italy to France he found himself enchanted, and he wrote that this magic road between France and Italy was like a poem. To the Paris of 1878 he paid fulsome praise and wrote of its tall buildings, vast and extensive halls of hotels, and the excellence of Turkish baths, which he enjoyed for the first time. On seeing the famous International Exhibition, which was being held at that time, he remarked that although his friends were expecting him to give a full description of his impressions, he was not able to do so because, he said, he was unable to sort out his varied impressions. Everything was so new to him, and there were so many things to see. Leaving Paris, he arrived in London by boat, and of his first impressions of London he wrote:

> At last we came from Paris to London. I have never seen such a sad, dark city anywhere in the world. Smoke, cloud, rain, fog, slush, and the bustle of the crowd in the streets seem to be the only characteristics which London possesses. I was in London only for two or three hours, and, when I left London, I breathed a sigh of relief.[49]

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[49] Ibid., p. 20.

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The Tagores eventually settled down in England, although they moved between London and Brighton and sometimes to Tunbridge Wells, then a small village; and young Rabindranath went about gathering his impressions. In his second letter he wrote about his impressions of Englishwomen whom he did not find more educated than their Indian sisters. He said:

> I had thought that intellectual food was the only spiritual nourishment of the people of this country. I had also thought that the women of this country considered intellectual pleasure to be of greater importance than dancing or some other fun. But I realize now that although higher education has already begun among them, yet this beginning is so insignificant that one does not notice it at all. I have been very much disappointed in many things in England.[50]

As he went about, he was struck by the ruthless struggle among people for survival and for existence, and he became aware of the differences between the upper and the lower classes. He wrote about the latter:

> When you see them you do not feel that they are capable of human feelings, for they seem to be just a step higher than animals. I feel a shiver when I see the faces of some among them, and looking at them no one would describe them as "human face divine."[51] And I cannot tell you how dirty they are ! I went only the other day to hear a case in the Police Court and it was about a young working-class boy severing the tongue of a horse just out of fun. Have you ever heard of such an act of bestiality?[52]

The Tagores went out a great deal, to dinner parties and to dances, and Rabindranath described with gusto and humour all that he saw and the people he met. He attended a session of Parliament and admired Gladstone's oratory and wrote about the row which the Irish members made in the House. The young "Rabi" also frequented ballrooms and gallantly accompanied his hostesses to the dinner table, but he felt more and more conscious of the low esteem in which Indians were held by the British. He despaired of the ignorance of the average Englishman regarding India and described how a well-informed Englishman with whom he was discussing British politics and British literature on a river trip asked him suddenly: " 'India, yes, but, under which King ?' I was stupefied and said: 'Under the British Government, of course?' He replied: 'I know that but under the direct control of which Indian King ?'[53] Afterwards the man apologized for his ignorance about India and said that Englishmen ought to know more about India."[53]

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[50] Ibid., p. 24.

[51] Ibid.,p. 26. The English words "human face devine" are used in the original text. [52] Ibid., p. 26.

In his sixth and seventh letters, Tagore wrote a great deal about the social habits of the British middle class and the nature of freedom enjoyed by English women. Later he found himself embroiled in a controversy with the Editor of *Bharati* in which his letters were being published. He also observed that there was very strong tension between the British upper and lower classes, and he was aghast at the distinction of class elaborately observed by the people belonging to different social strata. He thought that such distinctions were less rigid in Indian society and that the Indians showed greater compassion.

In the meantime, in his fifth letter, he had started a veritable warfare against the "peculiar new animal called *Inga-Banga* to be found in the index of a book on animals,"[54] about whose habits and physical characteristics he wanted to write a scientific essay. This *Inga-Banga* was the anglicized Bengali, S.K. Nandi, Esq., who, for instance, refused to return home because he feared that his wife and family, instead of receiving him with expressions such as "dear" and "darling," would burst into tears on seeing him again after so many years. This is one of the most brilliant writings in this book, and Tagore at that age (he was not older than 18) showed all the promise he was to prove later as a satirist. He lashed mercilessly at the new superstitions which these anglicized Indians had acquired and showed, by taunting them, by exposing the hollowness of their arguments, and by making them ridiculous, how little they had understood of Britain or India. This vitriolic attack on those Indians who were ashamed of their national or racial origin represented also the contemporary mood of the people, and Tagore in this way tried to introduce some sense of proportion and order into the chaotic ways of thinking which characterized the period. He was also, I think, developing his talent as a satirist (and he is one of the most outstanding in the Bengali language), the talent he was to use with devastating effect, by pitilessly attacking the foolishness, the heartlessness, and the lack of moral courage of his countrymen.

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[53] Ibid., p. 104.

[54] Ibid.

He was, however, particularly ferocious with the *Inga-Bangas*, who themselves, he said, were aware of their failings, although they showed themselves off to others, because they knew that

কাকস্য পক্ষৌ যদি স্বর্ণযুক্তৌ
মানিক্যযুক্তৌ চরণৌ চ তস্য
একৈক পক্ষে গজরাজমুক্তা
তথাপি কাকো ন চ রাজহংসঃ।

As I could not find any English rendering of these lines,[55] I have tried one myself, although I do not know if it conveys "rightly" all the nuances of meaning which the

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[55] Ibid., p. 71.

Poet wanted to convey. It is like this:

If a crow there be with wings of gold,
His two legs covered with rubies untold;
With ivory and diamonds studded though he be,
He never can match the royal swan, can he?

Thus Tagore's boundless contempt for those Indians who found pleasure in denouncing before their European guests the customs and habits of their own countrymen and who even went to the length of calling the Indians "natives," had had of course positive effects, for the tribe has disappeared. And it appears that Tagore later regretted that he used such violent language, and forty-five years later, in his introduction to *Paschatya Bhraman* ("Travels in the West") to which I have already referred, Tagore mentioned these letters and said:

> In some of these letters I gave a somewhat detailed description of the *Inga-Bangas*, but to-day they are a vanishing tribe.... If those descriptions were exaggerations, they were due to the *Inga-Bangas* themselves. Because I was a shy and harmless young man, they did not suspect me to be dangerous, and, therefore, they did not hesitate to express themselves freely. If I to-day want to ask their forgiveness I have to wait a little more, because they are on the other side of this world.[56]

Tagore also explained in the same introduction the reasons for his harsh judgement of the British and said:

> It will not be quite true to say that the character of the British which struck me most at that time was not due only to my young age and inexperience (*Balya-budhi*). The changes which have taken place in the nature of the people of this country cannot be said to be due to a progressive education. It has been very rapid and the picture which filled so well the passport of those days has become unrecognisable to-day.[57]

[56] See "Introduction," n. 44.

[57] Ibid.

But this arrogance which he showed by mercilessly attacking certain Indians, he explained later as inherent in the youth. He wrote:

> In order to prove his existence, the adolescent wants to show his rudeness by attacking everyone and so does the baby deer carry itself in a lofty manner as soon as it acquires its first horns. It is in the nature of adolescence that it wants to jump the barriers which the limitation of age puts on itself. . . . I was not yet old enough to understand that this bravado betrayed only my own poverty of thought and that it was a tragic example of early foolishness of an immature young boy.[58]

VIII

It is worth while remembering that Tagore's *Europe Prabasir Patra* appeared four years before the foundation of the Indian National Congress. The critical sentiments expressed in these letters on Europe had become by then common among the educated middle class which was more and more on the increase. Towards the fag end of the nineteenth century, the *fin de Siecle* in India, there was ever-increasing misery and poverty, so movingly described by Pierre Loti at the end of the century in his book *L'Inde sans les Anglais*. There were also increasing discontent, the beginning of a revolutionary movement, and the intense heart-searching among Indian intellectuals. Whereas the end of the century saw unheard-of accumulation of wealth and acquisition of scientific knowledge in Europe, millions of people were dying like flies in India because of famine, plague, and pestilence. Pierre Loti's immortal writings have, unto eternity I think, left behind the vignettes of Indian tragedy of the nineteenth century for posterity to read and ponder. India, alas, was then a far cry from the pranks of *La jeunesse doree* in Bois de Boulogne, the perfumed

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[58] Ibid.,

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memory of which we enjoy even today in the writings of Marcel Proust, for India was sinking in misery, in ignorance, and in subjection to an ever arrogant foreign Power.

At this juncture, friendly feelings towards Europe were not abundant. There was more talk of self-reliance and self-government, and much less of European thinking or European literature. Yet Romesh Chandra Dutt during this period of intense anti-Western feeling was able to adopt a more balanced view of the association of India and Europe, and, writing on the influence of European culture on Indian languages, he was able to say:

> Spread of European culture created the necessity of prose literature. Our writers began to be familiarized with ideas which could not find expression in verse. Philosophy and science came within the category of public tuition, and were learnt by an ever-increasing circle of students; and when they wanted to give expression to their ideas in the native tongue they found out its inadequacy.[59]

He then adds:

> A more liberal spirit was imbibed in this century from the West. And those who imbibed such notions were led to spread and popularize the knowledge they had obtained.[60]

But Dutt was not the only one among the intellectuals of the late nineteenth century who still valued highly India's association with liberal Europe. There were many politicians and social reformers, specially in Western India, who viewed with sorrow the trends towards a rift with European education and ideas. But general distrust of European values had become evident already in the middle of the nineteenth century which in other words meant that the Indian intellectuals were no longer prepared to place reliance on European methods for the regeneration of India, and thus towards the end of the nineteenth century, the question which agitated the Indian mind was no more that of rightness or wrongness of the European category of thinking but that of reorganization of national life. Even a superficial observer of the international scene, for instance T.N. Mukherjee, who was deputed by the Government of India to represent Indian trade at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886, was not quite convinced that this tendency was the right one. He published a book called *A Visit to Europe* after visiting Britain, France, and Germany, and although the author was interested generally in finding a market for Indian goods in Europe, yet his views are interesting in so far as they show that in spite of general discontent, the assessment was not one-sided.[61] For instance, discussing British rule and its effect on India, the author said: "At all events we are better off under the British rule than the continental Europeans under their governments.... We have still in India the middle ages without their horrors. . . the 19th century gently taking the fold off the eyes of the 9th century."[62] Thus did this trade representative of the Government evaluate India's position in the world after comparing it with countries like Germany and France. We need not take his views seriously because he did not possess a trained mind. Nevertheless, it is obvious that in the view of some Indians nineteenth-century Europe was still a potent factor in shaping the future of the country.

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[59] Romesh Chandra Dutt, *The Literature of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1895), pp. 4 and 5.

[60] Ibid.

A very different conclusion was, however, arrived at by a different sort of Indian visitor to Europe—a phi-

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[61] T.N. Mukherjee, *A Visit to Europe* (Calcutta, 1889).
[62] Ibid., p. 345.

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lanthropist from Bombay, Behramji M. Malabari, who went to Europe in 1893. Malabari had risen to an important position by hard work, and although by no means an intellectual, he was deeply interested in social reform, and wherever he went he tried to draw a comparison with the conditions prevailing in India. Being a shrewd observer of men, women, and things, Malabari enjoyed vastly his trip to Britain, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy, and recorded his opinions and impressions of Europe. They are included in a book entitled *An Indian Eye on English Life*, and they reveal to us a sophisticated mind and a person intensely attached to his country.[63] Malabari was a much-travelled man, but his heart was in his own Gujarat, and wherever he went and whatever he saw, he saw with Gujarati eyes. Writing about France, for instance, he said: "Going into French territory, we find it looks somewhat like my own Gujarat. The soil is very rich in contrast to some parts of England. For the first time I see bullocks in the fields at Saint Just."[64] During his visit to Paris, he found that the Parisians worked as leisurely as in an Indian city and were equally languid in the street. When in Germany, his mind again went back to India, and he took great delight in comparing the landscape and the people with those of India. He wrote:

> As we proceed, we find a simple life everywhere drawing near to India. The people are simple, men and women carrying loads barefooted. At Cologne I was to have the hottest and noisiest tram ride. I doubt if Bombay could be better; and yet the people seem to work more heartily than in Bombay.[65]

And a little further, writing about the German villages, he commented:

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[63] Behramji M. Malabari, *An Indian Eye on English Life: Or Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (London, 1893).
[64] Ibid., p. 194. [65] Ibid., pp. 196-7.

> The Germans are hard smokers and heavy eaters and drinkers of beer, but they are not drunkards so far as we can see. The streets are all clean; the crowd peaceful, people walking leisurely in small knots each in their own way. The villagers look happy and the women seem to be very hospitable.[66]

At Frankfurt/Main, Malabari studied the German social system and the German women and compared them with their counterparts in India. He wrote: "The German woman looks somewhat like her Parsee sister, comparable in girth, with a face on either side of which you may put a new-born baby to sleep."[67] Then he added that the German men did not seem to appreciate the cleverness of their women. He then wrote:

> The German has as yet to learn that though military prowess may make an Empire, it is mainly the influence of women of the right sort that will keep the Empire powerful and strong. In this respect, as in some others, Germany is almost the opposite of France.[68]

When Malabari went to Italy he began again to see everywhere something of India. In Florence he was very happy, and he wrote: "For the first time in Europe, we see, on our way, a regular vanjar of bullocks, goats, and sheep, with the familiar sound of their bells and of the song from the shepherd, like our Kathiawar prag." In Rome, when he went to see the Cathedral of Saint Peter, he was again reminded of India and of the Indian scene. He wrote: "The service at St. Peter's is very like what we see in Parsee and Hindu temples. What is Rome but the East ? What are her traditions but the Eastern?"[69] The same thing happened to Malabari when he went to Naples. He found Naples not unlike Bombay, and he discovered, very wrongly, that "the poorer people in Naples speak a sort of Asiatic Patois, a dialect half Turkish, half Urdu, and the Italians seem to me to speak Bengali."[70] And finally Malabari also indulged in political reflection, and talking about England he said that few sights in London had struck him so much as working men's "demonstrations" and "strikes", for he witnessed one of the first strikes organized in England towards the end of the nineteenth century. Reflecting on the governmental systems of India and Britain, he wrote first about the Parliament building at Westminster:

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[66] Ibid. [67] Ibid., p. 225. [68] Ibid. [69] Ibid., pp. 196-7.

> How like our Dewan-i-khas and Dewan-i-am are these Houses of Parliament. After seeing what little I have seen of British Parliamentary life I have no reason to be ashamed of the manner or the spirit of similar work done in India, for instance in the days of Akbar. No less real and imposing were those Durbars presided over by the Grand Moghul and attended by Hindu as well as Muslim counsellors representing different interests and opinions.[71]

And like a good Indian patriot Malabari concluded his reflections by saying: "When will enlightened Christian England admit us, Indians, to the Council of the Empire or to the Command of the Army?"

IX

In this atmosphere, surcharged with contradictory emotions but dominated by a feeling of grievance against Europe, the appearance of Swami Vivekananda brought a new element to the debate or dialogue on India and Europe which had begun at the beginning of the century. He was a new kind of Hindu; in fact, he was the product of a century of intermingling of Indian and European ideas, and although he called himself a Hindu monk, he did not conform to the traditional ideas of monastic life. He forsook the life of meditation for a life of dynamic action. And, above all, he devoted his life to the vindication of India's name, India's religion, and India's way of life. He did all this more or less in the same way as the nationalist theoreticians in Europe defended and interpreted the doctrine of nationalism in their respective countries during the entire period of the nineteenth century. Vivekananda had realized, at the very beginning of his career, that world importance had shifted to Europe and America and that if India ignored this fact, it did so at its peril. India, like other countries of Asia and Europe, had no choice but to pay heed to the new categories of thinking which arose as a result of the development of natural sciences. He, therefore, exhorted the Indians

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[70] Ibid., p. 199. [71] Ibid., p. 180.

> to sit at the feet of all, to learn great lessons, for, mark you, every one can teach us great lessons. . . . We, therefore, as true children of Manu, should be ready to learn the lessons of life or the life hereafter, from anyone who can teach us.[72]

But that was only one aspect of the relationship he had conceived between India and Europe. He believed at the same time in a mission which, he thought, India had to fulfil, and he said:

> We must not forget that we have also to teach great lessons to the world . . . . The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead . . . . This expansion, therefore, is the greatest sign of the revival of national life, and through this expansion our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our part of the general upheaval of the world, is going out to the eternal world.[73]

But how did Vivekananda envisage this expansion? He himself answered the question:

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[72] Swami Vivekananda, *Speeches and Writings* (Madras, 1927), p. 670.

[73] Ibid., p. 671.

> I am an imaginative man, and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race. This is the great ideal before us, and everyone must be ready for it . . . Let foreigners come and flood the land with their armies, never mind, up India, and conquer the world with your spirituality.[74]

This is an extract from Vivekananda's speech delivered in Madras towards the end of the century, and one sees how the cycle has turned within a century, from Rammohun's modest approach to the Unitarians to include the Brahmo Samaj in its fold, to Vivekananda's claim for India as the blessed *punya bhumi*

> the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godwards must come to attain its perfection, the land where humanity has developed farthest towards gentleness, generosity, purity and calm.[75]

Although no Gallup Poll existed at that time, one, however, infers from contemporary writings and documents that Vivekananda spoke for many millions of Indians and that he also voiced, in glorifying India in this form, the feelings of many more millions who did not know how to speak.

X

We have thus followed the progressive evolution during a whole century of the Indian view of Europe. In this study I have excluded as much as I could the consideration of the Indian image of Britain, because it is a separate subject by itself mainly on account of India's multiple contacts with Britain. Besides, because India came to know the rest of the world mainly through Britain, India's approach to Britain had a number of

[74] Ibid., p. 672.

[75] From the address delivered by Vivekananda in Colombo in 1897 on his return from the United States after attending the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Ill.

nuances which we do not find in its estimate of those European countries which I have discussed here. I have, therefore, tried to confine myself, although not entirely, to the Indian view of much of what is known today as Western Europe. Nevertheless, this study has remained somewhat incomplete because of another reason; I have not been able to use documents and sources which are available in different parts of India. On account of difficulty of travel, I had to content myself with whatever materials I could collect in northern India. In spite of the fact, however, that more materials from different parts of India would have given us a more complete picture, I do not think they will have substantially altered the analysis I have made in this study of different trends of thinking. These trends, as we have seen, can broadly be divided into three groups. First, the discovery by the Indians of new European sciences and thought led to the formation of the belief—elevated to a faith—that new knowledge acquired from Europe would eventually transform Indian society and also revitalize it in such a way as to make India a modern country in the European sense. The growth of this faith in the Indian mind is all the more interesting, because after the complete breakdown of the Indian social and political systems in the eighteenth century, following the collapse of the Mogul Empire, the whole of India, both spiritually and politically, was left with such a vacuum that this faith was able to kindle hope in the minds of many Indians. It, therefore, seemed in the beginning of the century that India had found at least the key to social progress and that as a result of the adoption of new revolutionary ideas, all its problems would come to an end. But, in the meantime, after the Napoleonic wars and also as an immediate result of the Vienna Settlements of 1814 and the political system of Concert of Europe devised by Metternich, the countries of Europe, instead of remaining static,

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began to become richer and more progressive, and all this, together with the rise of finance capital and rapid industrialization of Western Europe, brought about with remarkable rapidity a new type of society in Europe, which became more and more alien to the contemporary Indian society. Indians were also not able to cope with the new social and political concepts which were forming the minds of the Europeans and which led to far more revolutionary changes in the habits of the people and their ways of living and thinking. By the time the new middle class, mostly in Bengal, had assimilated the heady new ideas given to them by Raja Rammohun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, it appeared that already newer truths had been revealed in the countries of Western Europe. This gave rise to the second phase of Indian approach to Europe, which, as we have noticed, was characterized by an increasing distrust and even hostility to Europe and the Europeans. Political factors in the shape of total subjection of India by the British after 1858 contributed to this estrangement even more fully, and, eventually, led to the growth of intense nationalism, distorting largely the image of Europe which had been formed in the Indian mind during the early part of the century. This new nationalism in India was born more out of sadness and frustration than out of *joie de vivre*, as was the case in the early years of the century; and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who wrote the first national hymn of India, was, as is evident from all his writings, saddened by the sight of greater and greater poverty and misery into which India was sinking. The first rush of enthusiasm, which was the real cause of renaissance in several parts of India, began to yield place to a sense of depression and failure, specially because of the realization of the fact by the Indians that all too unwittingly they had become a subject nation and that their status as human beings had suddenly become inferior to that of the people whose ideas they had so enthusiastically embraced. And, lastly, the third trend—the development of which I have tried here to analyse—arose from the intermingling of these very forces, which were often contradictory and opposed one to another, leading to a period of hope, in spite of the degradation, hunger, and humiliation to which the people of India were being subjected. The rationale of this hope is very difficult to define, because, looking at the picture of India at this period, one really finds very few real signposts of hope, although, with the rise of a powerful literature in northern India, it seemed that by groping in the darkness the people of India were at last stumbling into something very positive and hopeful. There was also no doubt that the overriding effect of world-wide social progress, which also reflected somewhat on the Indian society, made people dimly conscious that they would also one day be able to share this progress.

Another interesting thing to observe in this connexion is that though India passed through an intense period of anti-Europeanism at this time, it, however, brought India willy-nilly nearer to Europe than it dared to admit. This was partly due to the fact that the ancient bonds which connected India with some of the countries of South-East Asia, East Asia, and West Asia had been irrevocably snapped long before the Middle Ages. Thus, in spite of being within the geographical complex of Asia, India, since the advent of the Portuguese towards the end of the fifteenth century, had involved itself more and more in the European cultural orbit, if not within the orbit of the European political system. This fact, though not very clear to many people during the period of India's struggle for freedom in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, became, however, more obvious after Indian Independence, when most Indians realized that the many-sided association with Europe for nearly

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five centuries could not be wiped out entirely and that during this period of five hundred years, India's political and cultural orientation had inclined more heavily towards Europe.

As far as the nineteenth century was concerned, we have seen how the process of Indo-European impacts went through at least three phases, leaving behind indelible impressions on the minds of Indian intellectuals. A counterpart of this process was the movement of Europe's Oriental Renaissance in the nineteenth century brought about by the British, German, and French scholars and Indologists whose voyages and researches in India and into India's past and the subsequent publication by them in three European languages of books and monographs on India affected considerably not only the religious thinking of many Europeans, but also their approaches to problems of art and literature and even to theology and science. Speaking of this influence, Donald F. Lack says: "While concrete samples from Asia's life and cultures testify to its existence as a civilized, rich and variegated part of an expanding world... the Europeans were specially fascinated by the mere existence of new places, by exotic varieties of flora and fauna, and by the crafts of silk production, rice cultivation, book-making, weaponry and ship-building. Of the innumerable artistic products of Asia, the Europeans are rapturous in their admiration for monuments, sculptures, porcelains, lacquers and embroideries.... On a more abstract plane, the Europeans were impressed by mass warfare techniques, the widespread existence of the lunar calendar and the use of Malay as the lingua franca of Asian commerce."[76] This bewilderment and admiration found expression in books and tracts which later formed the cardinal plank of Orientology, leading to a

[76] Donald F Lack, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago, Ill., 1965), p. 853.

spiritual effervescence which some have described as a phase of Oriental Renaissance in Europe.

Where India was concerned, there had been, of course, quite a large number of publications on India's past leading to the study of Indian thought over the ages, and this contributed a great deal to the filtering of new Indian ideas into the European system of thought. The Holy Father, the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, spontaneously quoted a text from the Upanishads on his arrival in Bombay in December 1964. This was unthinkable even two decades ago. This but illustrates the extent of the influence exerted by European scholars on European thinking. In India, at any rate, the image of Europe, which its impact produced on the Indian mind, though not continuously the same, was, nevertheless, never blurred, and the impact itself, though often frustrating and unsatisfactory, was, however, as we have seen, always stimulating, challenging, and, above all, constantly invigorating.

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THE POST-WAR TRANSFORMATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH

M.S. RAJAN

Here is a fresh interpretation of the significance of the post-war changes in the Commonwealth of Nations. It is a closely reasoned, compact analysis and evaluation of the changes in the nature, structure and functioning of the post-war Commonwealth that have come about as a result of the Asian-African (and now Caribbean) membership of the Commonwealth. It is more especially an appraisal of the seminal significance of India's membership to the development of the Commonwealth. The author's thesis is that the post-war changes, in their political and psychological aspects, are of revolutionary significance in the history of the development of the Commonwealth. In propounding this view, the first Indian Professor of Commonwealth History and Institutions in the Commonwealth seeks to rebut the view expressed in a recent book on the Commonwealth by Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker, the British Commonwealth Relations Secretary in the last Labour Government.

IN DEFENCE OF LIBERALISM

K.M. PANIKKAR

Based on the first Shrimati Sarojini Naidu Lecture Series delivered by Sardar Panikkar at the Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi, this volume presents an able and informed survey of the genesis, rise to the position of ideological supremacy, and the eventual decline of liberalism and its tradition. In a brief compass of four lectures, the author discusses the main assumptions of liberalism and its inherent contradictions, analyses the ideas and doctrines which were found potent enough to inspire generations of intellectuals, indicates its permanent achievements, and enumerates the reasons for its eclipse. In the introductory chapter, the author surveys the development of liberal thought in India and makes a pragmatic assessment of its impact on life and thought in India. In the concluding chapter, he stresses the importance of cultivating the liberal attitude in social and political life and outlines the special need of adopting the liberal values and ways of doing it.

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